

right than wrong about the impacts of these trade agreements.

He talked about labor, saying: Don't worry. This is going to put enforceable labor provisions on Vietnam, where you can't have a union, where you have child labor, prison labor, and you get paid 60 cents an hour. He says: We are going to fix all that.

Well, I have read that chapter. I can't talk about it. It is classified. But I can say this. It will be as effective in dealing with the abuses—and, Brunei is even worse than Vietnam—in Brunei or Vietnam, in terms of their labor and working conditions, as the recent U.S. Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Guess what? In Colombia, they still kill people who try and form unions, and we have no recourse against them. So it is not going to fix that problem.

He says: Well, I was in law school when NAFTA passed, and these people are just living in the past. Well, unfortunately, you are bringing the past to the future.

This agreement has been vetted by 500 corporations in real time. They can put it on a big screen in their boardroom, bring in all their lawyers and staff, and say: Let's change these words. Let's make it look like the labor stuff is enforceable, but then we put this here, and it isn't.

I can read it, too. I can go to the basement of this building and I can read it in secret, and I can't talk about it.

So this is an agreement that is for labor, for the environment, for consumers, when it is being written in corporate boardrooms and then submitted to the Special Trade Representative who then puts that text into a special agreement we can't see? No, the President is very, very wrong about that.

He says we are wrong because we are making things up about undermining regulation, food safety, worker safety, and even financial regulations. Well, we are not. This has something called investor-state dispute resolution, which means anyone can challenge any U.S. law. Any foreign corporation, Japanese corporation, or Bruneian corporation can challenge a U.S. law in a secret tribunal staffed by lawyers who have no conflict of interest, no legal body underlying their decisions, and who one day represents corporations and the next day sit as judges.

And he is right, they can't make us repeal our laws. He is absolutely right. But they can make us pay to keep them. We had to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to Brazil to keep subsidizing cotton in this country.

Now, I wasn't into subsidizing the cotton, but it really irks me that we were subsidizing it here, and because of the power of the farm lobby, we paid Brazil hundreds of millions of dollars to keep that subsidy.

The Japanese were killing dolphins to catch tuna, and we passed a law to just label dolphin-safe tuna so consumers could decide, too. We had a big campaign with friendly dolphins.

The Mexicans won in the same process. They won a judgment against the United States of America—that it was an unfair trade barrier—and we had to pay the Mexicans to not fish for dolphins. And then they appealed yet to another place and actually made us eliminate dolphin-safe altogether.

Yes, it can undermine our labor laws, it can undermine our environmental laws, and it can undermine our consumer protection laws when they are challenged by a foreign corporation. So the President is yet wrong again. We are not making stuff up.

Currency manipulation, the Japanese wall—every U.S. auto manufacturer knows about this. They manipulate currency. Therefore, their vehicles are \$8,000 cheaper than they would be if their currency was fairly traded—\$8,000—and we are going to compete on a level playing field?

This agreement gives them full access, with no tariffs, to our pickup truck market, which means the end of pickup truck manufacturing in America. The iconic Fords and Chevys, forget about it. They are gone with an \$8,000 advance.

We couldn't put currency manipulation into this and say that is not fair, because the Japanese didn't want it. But they are giving us a big concession. They are going to buy some American rice. Well, isn't that great? We are trading tens of thousands of auto jobs for a few jobs working in the rice fields in California. And that will only last until the Japanese challenge the rice farmers. Because they get subsidized Federal water, they will ultimately be barred from the Japanese market because they will lose in a secret tribunal under this ISDS provision.

Finally, I have just got to wonder what the President is talking about when he says we are speculating and it is made up.

Oh, Mexican trucks. I predicted when we had the agreement with Mexico that they would force us to let Mexican trucks drive freely in America. Guess what? We lost that, and they put tariffs on our goods because they couldn't drive their trucks all around our country.

There is great precedence here. He hasn't fixed a darned thing. He probably hasn't even read the agreement.

WOMEN'S HEALTH WEEK AND NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Women's Health Week and National Nurses Week.

Yes, this week is Women's Health Week—a time to raise awareness about manageable steps women can take to improve their health.

Currently, one in five women is in fair or poor health, and almost 40 per-

cent report struggling with mental health issues. Women are less likely than men to be employed full time, meaning they are less likely to be eligible for employer-based health benefits.

Difficulty finding and maintaining employer-based coverage is especially pronounced for older women, who are more likely to develop conditions like breast cancer. But thanks to ObamaCare, women's health took a monumental step forward.

Before ObamaCare, insurance companies could discriminate against women, denying coverage to women—of course, to all people—due to preexisting conditions, such as cancer and even previous pregnancies. Today, being a woman or becoming pregnant is no longer a preexisting condition.

The National Women's Law Center estimates that insurers' practice of gender rating cost women about a billion dollars a year before ObamaCare. ObamaCare ends gender rating. It requires health plans to cover women's preventive services, like contraceptive care and OB/GYN visits, without cost sharing.

Accessible contraceptive coverage is particularly important. Prior to ObamaCare, more than half of all women between the ages of 18 and 34 struggled to afford it.

In addition, every health insurance plan is now required to offer maternity care. Prior to the passage of ObamaCare, the National Women's Law Center found that only 12 percent of private plans included maternity services.

And even without those major improvements, health care accessibility remains a challenge. Almost one out of three women reports not visiting a doctor due to the cost.

Women are still less likely to be insured than men. And even when they have insurance, women face increasingly high deductibles, copayments, and other cost sharing requirements, forcing major sacrifices just in order to make ends meet.

A recent study found that over 40 percent of women have unmet medical needs due to the cost of medical care. This problem is particularly acute in States that have not expanded Medicaid. Currently, 3 million uninsured women live in States that have not expanded Medicaid coverage.

So we have come so far in increasing access to affordable and adequate health care for women, but we still have a long way to go.

This week is also National Nurses Week, and I can't pass up the chance to recognize the important contributions that nurses make—improving women's and men's health care every day. After all, we might not have ObamaCare if it weren't for the support and advocacy for nurses all across the country.

This year's National Nurses Week 2015 theme is: "Ethical Practice. Quality Care." It recognizes the importance of ethics in nursing and acknowledges

the strong commitment, compassion, and care nurses display in the practice of their profession.

Registered Nurses, or RNs, are the largest segment of the health care workforce, with 3.1 million RNs, and that number is growing. RNs meet Americans' health care needs on every level. They provide preventive care, such as screenings and immunizations; they diagnose, treat, and help to manage chronic illnesses; and they help patients make critical health decisions every day. But most importantly, nurses take the time to care for each patient during a difficult time in their or their family's lives.

□ 1215

We have plenty of evidence that hiring more nurses leads directly to improved quality care and patient outcomes.

We have seen study after study showing this connection, including a recent analysis showing that one out of every four unanticipated events that leads to death or injury are related to nurse understaffing; yet we continue to see nurses understaffed at medical facilities.

Nurses around the country have identified understaffing as the single most important barrier they face in providing quality care to their patients. It is also a barrier to quality improvement and efforts to reduce preventable readmissions.

I have introduced legislation called the Safe Nurse Staffing for Patient Safety and Quality Care Act, which would help solve this serious problem by establishing a Federal minimum standard in all hospitals for direct care registered nurse to patient staffing ratios.

This problem is not confined to hospitals. Nursing homes are currently required to only have a direct care nurse on staff 8 hours a day. This simply makes no sense. Patients are in these facilities 24 hours a day and need access to round-the-clock nursing care. That is why I have introduced the Put a Registered Nurse in the Nursing Home Act.

We should be thanking nurses, who are considered the most ethical of our healthcare system, and I applaud them.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 16 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WALKER) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

Reverend Andrew Walton, Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C., offered the following prayer:

As the gavel sounds and a new day of business begins, we pause to acknowledge the eternal, creative, redemptive spirit of life that unites all people, transcending political persuasion, personal bias, or cultural creed.

We come seeking the wisdom of the ages that points us away from easy choices of rigid certitude that divide and separate but, rather, guides us toward challenging compromises of flexible possibility that connect and unite.

May we seek a common good where all people know freedom, equality, justice, and mercy; a common good grounded in compassion, gratitude, and generosity. May we remember we are one human family in which the pain of one is the pain of all and the joy of one is the joy of all.

May we find this common good in the conversations, deliberations, and achievements of this day and in the countless opportunities that come our way each and every day.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. KILDEE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

EASTERN EUROPE PROMOTES PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last week, I was grateful to participate in a congressional delegation with congressional colleagues MADELEINE BORDALLO and REID RIBBLE, coordinated ably by Army Majors Bobby Cox and Jimmy Crook, to visit dynamic Eastern European allies.

In the Czech Republic, it was heartwarming to see the affection for America at Pilsen upon the 70th anniversary of their liberation by the U.S. Army.

M.K. Air Base in Romania is a symbol of growing Romanian-U.S. defense cooperation. The heroic and courageous leaders at Kiev, Ukraine, were unified in facing Putin's aggression where 7,000 civilians have been killed.

Georgia's proven partnership with NATO is confirmed with extraordinary service by their military for freedom and democracy. The Novo Selo training base in Bulgaria is world class, with young Bulgarians and Americans working side by side to promote peace through strength.

In each country, we were welcomed by dedicated U.S. Ambassadors, with talented Embassy personnel, promoting warm relationships with the new emerging democracies for the mutual benefit of all citizens.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and the President by his actions should never forget September the 11th in the global war on terror.

LET'S PASS THE HIGHWAY AND TRANSIT TRUST FUND BILL

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, once again, House Republican leadership's culture of governing crisis to crisis is endangering hundreds of thousands of American jobs and thousands of critical construction projects across the country.

There are only 7 legislative days left until the highway and transit trust fund expires on May 31, but there is no plan yet to act. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 660,000 good-paying construction jobs are hanging in the balance; 6,000 critical construction projects across the country are also being threatened.

For too long, we have been stuck in these short-term patches that fail to meet the challenges of our Nation's crumbling roads and bridges as other nations, our competitors, advance their infrastructure and pass us by leaps and bounds.

We have got to get to work to fixing America's crumbling roads and bridges. It is the job of the Congress to do this. We need to do our job.

We continue to wait, as Democrats, for a plan that we can work together on to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure. It is up to the Republican leadership to act, and I am calling upon them to do just that.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

(Mr. EMMER of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of National Police Week, when we remember the sacrifice of our Nation's law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.

This year's commemoration falls during a time of heightened tension between our officers and the civilians they have sworn to protect, and it serves as a solemn reminder to all of us the importance of communication, duty, and mutual respect.